I have chosen to read the article, “Do we still need classification?” written by Eric Hunter. I thought this article was useful because it gave lots of example when discussing issues. Some major issues discussed in the article. Those major issues mentioned in the article are that classification can’t be ignored, online library catalogue doesn’t offer classification facility such as subject search, the use of Boolean operators and indexing on the materials.

First issue raised in the article is that classification is part of our life and it plays an important role to organise and group things together. I believe that we use the technique in everyday life without thinking about it. In addition, we classify things so that we can access and retrieve materials with less effort and effectively. For example, I classify CDs by its name in alphabetical order. I do this so that when I need something, I can find it easily without any difficulty. Additionally, I classify things so I will get appropriate materials. In contrast, if I don’t classify things, I find it very hard to find materials and often those materials were never be found. Thus, classification enables us to organise and manage things and it is our daily habit so it can’t be forgotten.

Another issue mentioned in the article is that online library catalogue doesn’t offer classification facility such as subject search. Many online library catalogue needs ‘keyword’ or author’s name to retrieve correct materials and find the class number for that record. Also some materials may not contain the word that wasn’t entered in the ‘keyword’ so that material can’t be found unless a correct word is entered. Furthermore, another article called DigiCult, written by Tudhope and Binding, agreed with the issue raised by Eric Hunter. Tudhope and Binding said that online catalogues still haven’t been able to introduce subject search so that users aren’t getting appropriate access because records aren’t classified well. I agree with both authors because I found it hard to use online library catalogue if I require finding the right materials without knowing the exact title or author’s name and this process would take time to retrieve one. Furthermore, if I couldn’t find the relevant materials, I need to think about the alternate keyword to find the one that is suitable. However, if online catalogues have subject search, I believe it would allow users to find the relevant materials more effectively and efficiently because it will search for materials that have that subject topic or content, not
title of materials. Therefore even though one of the materials doesn’t contain a topic I’m looking for, it will be able to find it because of that reason. Thus it would be better for users if the online library catalogue has an ability to search materials that are related to the ‘keyword’.

Another search facility that can be used to classify, especially the World Wide Web is Boolean operators. This method enables us to limit the search when using the search engine on the website or text database. Furthermore this technique allows us to sort the search result because it helps us to limit words we wish to search. Hence, it would be less effort needed to get more accurate materials and omit any unwanted materials so that correct materials can be found quickly and accurately. However, some researchers say that Boolean operators are not good to use for the World Wide Web because of inefficient search result but I disagree with this. I found it very useful because I can narrow the keyword down and specify a particular word that I need. From my experience, I used Boolean operators to search for the particular journals, such as ‘Internet banking AND security’ using the database. This gave me materials that are something to do with Internet banking and security, and avoided getting many unwanted records. Therefore, this enabled me to gain access to classified and relevant records in a short amount of time.

Third issue mentioned in the article was about indexing language on materials on the World Wide Web. Some researchers believe that indexing language is the key role for classification for materials on the WWW because sometimes Boolean operators fail to retrieve matching pages. Boolean operators are used to search for the general term, not too complex. Therefore most of materials have indexing language so that when users type in keyword and search for it, that keyword and indexing language for a particular material should match. However, Tudhope and Binding said that sometimes users may use more complex words that indexing may not be able to handle. I agree with what Eric Hunter and those researchers are saying. I rarely experience Boolean operators to fail but from my experience, when I searched for ‘Musical instrument’, only relevant pages were shown by using indexing language. Furthermore, it handled well most of the time and did return relevant materials. In contrast, if materials have bad indexing
language, users may miss important information and they may get totally irrelevant materials instead. This would stress users because they don’t want to look through many materials and determine the right one. This process is inefficient and ineffective. Furthermore, I think that this method is as important as Boolean operators. Thus, it is important to have good indexing language so that materials will be classified into the right category and when users search for a word, only relevant materials should be shown.

Overall, I believe that classification plays a significant role on our life. Classification allows us to manage things and enable users to find the relevant materials efficiently. Furthermore, we can avoid losing important materials. In addition, if online catalogues introduce subject search it enables us to find more relevant materials by typing keyword and it will search for materials that contain that keyword in the document. Hence, this would decrease the risk of missing those materials that don’t have the keyword in the title. Boolean operators do help us find classified materials even though author, Eric Hunter, said that he and some researchers found that it is inefficient method. In fact, it helped me finding the relevant information and avoids getting unwanted materials. Additionally, indexing language assists us to retrieve appropriate materials on the World Wide Web. However, it needs to have well-defined indexing language in order to retrieve the correct materials. Even though materials require having well-defined indexing language, it will still help us find the relevant materials because a search engine will look for the materials with the matching keywords. Therefore, classification assists us in many ways so that we can retrieve important materials efficiently but also enable us to organise and manage things as well.

Reference:
• Tudhope, D. & Binding, C.(2004), "A case study of a faceted approach to knowledge organisation and retrieval in the cultural heritage sector", thematic issue 6, June, pp. 30-37